

# Victoria Street Newz

*“All the news that fits,  
we print”*

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## **If Landlords Renovate, Must You Vacate?**

*article by Sean Condon  
photo of Sandrine by D-Shots*

Sandrine Simonnet's one-bedroom Vancouver apartment looks like it's in perfect condition. It has nice hardwood floors, a modern living room and no signs of damage. For \$920 a month, it's considered a good deal in Kitsilano.

The only problem is that every time it rains, there's a leak in her bedroom. For the past three years, every time her landlord, Hollyburn Properties, increases the rent, Simonnet has asked them to fix the leak. But instead of making the repair, an executive from Hollyburn told her she should consider herself lucky she pays as little as she does.

Simonnet's "luck" ran out earlier this month when she got an eviction notice. On September 1st, Hollyburn sent out eviction notices to at least 13 tenants in the 39-unit Reid Manor complex so it could "re-plumb the domestic water supply in the building," and engage in an "extensive renovation" of suites that have not been previously renovated.

*continued on page 3 ...*



*"BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE COMMUNITY"*

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*more rants at: [janinebandcroft.blogspot.com](http://janinebandcroft.blogspot.com)*

I'm no longer eligible for interest relief but was advised that I can write to the government requesting interest only status. That means my loan will never ever be paid off, but the bank will receive prime plus 2% from me every month .... apparently they need it



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“They don’t need to renovate my suite, they just need to fix the leak” says Simonnet. “They obviously don’t care about the people who live in their building; they’re just looking for more money.”

Booted, then rents rise

It’s not the first time Hollyburn has sent out a letter like this. Over the past seven years the West Vancouver-based company has done mass evictions in a number of its buildings for renovations. It is an issue that is affecting the entire city. With about 70 families threatened with eviction in a Marpole rental complex, there have been at least a dozen cases of renovation evictions across Metro Vancouver over the past four years.

After the suites are emptied and renovated, they are usually rented out to new tenants at a rate roughly 50 per cent higher. Last week Hollyburn was advertising online one-bedroom apartments in the Reid Manor for \$1,400.

While landlord companies insist they are serving their tenants by repairing ageing buildings, housing advocates claim the companies are exploiting a loophole in the province’s Residential Tenancy Act that allows landlords to evict tenants for minor renovations and then raise the rent. A growing number of tenants are now calling on the BC Liberal government to change the legislation before more companies renovate away affordable housing in the city.

Gut and demolish

In 2006, Hollyburn sent out eviction notices to about 50 tenants in the West End’s Bay Tower. But when Bay Tower tenants fought the evictions all the way to the British Columbia Supreme Court, they raised awareness in Vancouver about the RTA’s vulnerability.

The media attention and ensuing legal fight hasn’t stopped Hollyburn from following a similar formula in other buildings. The company owns 43 residential buildings in the Vancouver region and another eight in Calgary and Toronto. It has now done the renovation evictions in at least six buildings -- five in the West End.

In each eviction notice, Hollyburn stresses how severe the renovations will be. Water will be shut off, walls may be removed, bathrooms “gutted” and kitchens “demolished.” But evicted tenants have argued that Hollyburn is exaggerating the repairs and that the actual renovations, such as new kitchen cabinets, are “cosmetic” and don’t require eviction.

“The renovations were totally unnecessary,” says Sharon Isaak, a Bay Tower resident and member of Renters at Risk, a West End advocacy group formed from Hollyburn evictions. “There were some things that needed to be done to the roof, but everything in the suites worked fine.”

However, Alan Wasel, senior property manager with Hollyburn, says many of the buildings the company has bought over the past decade, like Reid Manor and Bay Tower, are 40 to 50 years old and in desperate need of repair. Rents are then increased to recoup costs.

“We’re not taking advantage of anybody,” says Wasel. “Basically what we’re doing is we’re taking the opportunity as it’s presented to us to renovate the building. We’ve been replenishing the rental stock for years now and we want to offer the best

product that we can.”

A niche market

Although the RTA is supposed to protect tenants from illegal evictions and extreme price hikes, housing advocates say landlords are finding a way around the law.

The RTA only allows landlords to increase rent every year by a maximum of two per cent plus inflation (currently 3.7 per cent). But Section 49(6)(b) states a landlord can end a tenancy if they have “all the necessary permits and approvals required by law, and intends in good faith to renovate or repair the rental unit in a manner that requires the rental unit to be vacant.” Once the suite is empty, landlords can charge whatever they wish.

Tom Durning of TRAC (Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre) says Vancouver’s housing market has made it ripe for exploitation by unscrupulous landlords. Priced out of owning a home, young middle-class workers are putting more pressure on the city’s already stressed rental market. According to the latest Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation report, Greater Vancouver’s vacancy rate is a mere 0.7 per cent.

“Companies like Hollyburn are seeing a niche here,” he says. “There are a lot of middle-class kids who want to live downtown. And the money they make in charging higher rent to them more than makes up the cost of renovations.”

With the average one-bedroom apartment in the City of Vancouver now at \$902 a month, Durning says the renovation loophole means low- and mid-income earners are getting pushed out of the city.

Canada Line victims

On the same day that tenants in Kitsilano’s Reid Manor received eviction notices, seven tenants at the 70-unit Marine Gardens complex at Cambie and Southwest Marine Drive also received eviction notices because the landlord wants to tear out the central hot water heating system and replace it with an electric heating system.

A tight-knit and multi-cultural community with a number of low-income tenants, neighbours quickly rallied around the evicted tenants to see if there was a way to keep them from being forced out.

But when Marine Gardens tenant Gillian Skeet, who did not receive a notice, called the landlord’s office, she says she was told eviction notices were going to be sent out in stages to the entire complex. Having endured two years of construction outside their building for the Canada Line, Skeet says she and her neighbours feel as though they are victims of the city’s growth.

“For the longest time we had no access to Cambie between 49th and Marine Drive,” says Skeet. “It’s been a nightmare and it’s made life difficult. But because we all value living here, we were all willing to put up with it. Now it’s being used against us and we’re about to lose our homes.”

Skeet, who pays \$1,024 a month for a three-bedroom apartment, says many of the older tenants pay low rent because the previous owners rarely gave rent increases. Marine Gardens tenants asked for a group meeting with Bob Nijjar, who bought the building last year, to try and negotiate a settlement, but their request was denied.

Multiple calls to Nijjar for an interview were not returned. The number the owner gave the tenants is the same

for the Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel on Kingsway, formerly known as the Biltmore Hotel.

Skeet says many of the tenants are now in “total despair” and not sure whether they can afford to stay in Vancouver.

Supreme Court challenges

While renters in Vancouver feel vulnerable, two important British Columbia Supreme Court rulings suggest the courts are willing to step in where the provincial government will not.

Last year, in the case of Allman v. Amacon, the Court of Appeal ruled against Amacon Property Management Service after it attempted to evict half the tenants in the 240-unit Richmond Gardens complex for “minor” renovations and then raise rents as much as \$590 more a month. The court ruled that evicting tenants for minor renovations would drastically diminish tenants’ rights. All of the evictions were quashed.

The same year, the Supreme Court ruled that Hollyburn could not refuse Bay Tower residents an opportunity to return to their renovated suite at the same price.

In Berry and Kloet v. British Columbia (Residential Tenancy Act, Arbitrator), Justice Williamson ruled that, “It is irrational to think that s. 49(6) could be used by a landlord to evict tenants because a very brief period was required for a renovation in circumstances where the tenant agreed to vacate the premises for that period of time. It could not have been the intent of the legislature to provide such a ‘loophole’ for landlords.”

The rulings may be changing the way landlords deal with tenants who challenge evictions. Just a year after the Berry ruling, Hollyburn sent out eviction notices to tenants in the 40-unit Glenmore building in the West End. But when 10 of the tenants took Hollyburn to court to fight the eviction, the company decided to mediate a settlement -- the first reported instance of Hollyburn negotiating. The two sides agreed to a \$65-a-month across the board increase in rent and a moratorium on any renovations for at least three years.

A right of first refusal

The Supreme Court decisions, however, don’t guarantee that tenants can avoid eviction. In order to create a clear ruling, housing activists are now pushing the provincial government to amend the RTA with a Right of First Refusal clause.

In 2006, Ontario added a Right of First Refusal section to its Residential Tenancies Act that states: “A tenant who receives notice of termination of a tenancy for the purpose of repairs or renovations may... have a right of first refusal to occupy the rental unit as a tenant when the repairs or renovations are completed.” The tenant may reoccupy under the previous terms and at the same price.

Last April, NDP MLA and housing critic Diane Thorne introduced a private member’s bill that would amend the RTA with a Right of First Refusal clause and force landlords to give four months notice and two free months of rent if they evict tenants because of renovations instead of the current two months notice and one free month.

“If the Right of Refusal was made law as it is now in Ontario, it would negate [renovation evictions] from happening,” says Thorne. “Because why would Hollyburn, for instance, do this if the only reason is to be able to bring in new tenants or double or triple the rent.”

Landlords ‘entitled to feed their families’

Thorne’s bill is now sitting as an order paper where it will likely remain -- private members bills rarely get passed, especially ones from the Opposition. Housing Minister Rich Coleman, who brought in the Residential Tenancy Act in 2004 as the then-solicitor-general, said he would review the act after the Amacon ruling, but has not made any indication that he plans to do so. Multiple requests for an interview with Coleman were not returned.

While Coleman has shown no support for a Right of First Refusal amendment, it is certainly not supported by the landlord industry. Al Kemp, CEO of Rental Owners and Managers Society of British Columbia, says the Right of First Refusal would punish ethical landlords who spend thousands of dollars to upgrade old buildings.

“To then say all the tenants have the right to move back in at the same rent, that’s ridiculous,” says Kemp. “Landlords are in business like anybody else, they’re entitled to feed their families and they’re entitled to get a return on their investment. So with the Right of Refusal, [for a tenant] to come back in at the same rent will simply cause a 60-year-old building to become a 70-year-old building.”

Taking the rental road

Tenants at Marine Gardens have decided to fight the evictions and have a group hearing scheduled at the Residential Tenancy Branch for October 20th. According to the City of Vancouver’s Enquiry Centre, the owner has not received any permits to do renovations to the complex, which may make the eviction notices illegal.

Evicted tenants at Reid Manor are less sure whether they can endure a long battle with Hollyburn -- although the Enquiry Centre’s records state that Hollyburn didn’t obtain the renovation permits for the complex until Sept. 4th, three days after it had sent out the eviction notices.

Corina McNeill, who has lived at Reid Manor for 15 years, says she went to look at an apartment and was shocked to find 50 people waiting in line to see a tiny one-bedroom apartment going for more than \$850. Suffering from poor physical health and on disability, McNeill now has to find a new place to live in a city that doesn’t have a lot of rental housing to spare.

“All the people I know in Vancouver live in this building,” says McNeill. “It’s the people you rely on and know that they’ll help you out in the middle of the night if you need them. I’m on disability and my income has gone down a lot and now Hollyburn is kicking me out. I’m going to have a really hard time finding a new place.”

But more than anything, tenants from both the Reid Manor and Marine Gardens say they know that even if they do fight and win, there needs to be a legislative change to keep landlords from exploiting the loophole.

“We need a political solution, we need legislation and we need it now,” says Skeet. “We already have a shortage of affordable housing and every month that goes by that we don’t have that legislation the amount of affordable housing shrinks.”

Sean Condon is the editor of ‘Megaphone,’ Vancouver’s street paper (megaphonemagazine.com). This article was originally published at The Tyee (thetyee.ca) and republished with the author’s permission.



# If the Olympic Family Really Believed in “Inclusivity”

by Christopher A. Shaw



*The following is excerpted from Five Ring Circus: Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games and reprinted by permission of the author.*

After the 2010 Games were given to Vancouver, the Impact on Innercity Communities (ICI) working group was established. It comprised a number of groups working on issues of poverty in Vancouver alongside some in the real estate/development sector.<sup>25</sup> VANOC was there too. The different levels of government didn’t sit at the table but notionally signed on to the report’s recommendations. These included:

- 800 units of new housing constructed per year for four years, giving a total of 3,200 new units of housing for the city’s homeless. These numbers were based on the City of Vancouver’s projected housing needs;
- 200 units of single-room occupancy (SRO) to be bought or leased for each of four years, with the goal of improving and protecting 800 units of existing housing;
- 200 units of Olympic worker housing to be converted into low-income housing after the Games;
- increasing all social assistance rates by 50% above March 2007 levels; and
- eliminating barriers to access to income assistance of various types.<sup>26</sup>

The City of Vancouver’s response was that the ICI’s recommendations were in line with Council’s policies, but simply couldn’t be funded without provincial assistance. The City also refused to make any guarantees about any number of units in the Athletes’ Village for social housing; It seemed they’d first have to see how much money they made on selling the bulk of them.

At the council session where City staff presented these conclusions, David Eby of the Pivot Legal Society offered them a lifeline: The City didn’t have to break its housing promises; instead it could find fiscally creative ways to make these a reality. They could, for example, take their profits from the sale of the False Creek lands to Millennium, estimated by the City to be over \$64 million, ask VANOC to take funds from their employee bonus package, add on money now slated for more police, etc., and *voilà*, the money to build the 3,200 units would be available.<sup>27</sup> It was simply a matter of being willing to do it. City Council had signed off on the promise to protect the homeless back in 2002 when the Games were still just a twinkle in Jack Poole’s eye, so it all seemed a no-brainer. How about it? Some councilors found Eby’s ideas “interesting.” Would they do it? Well, no, they wouldn’t.

In its failure to keep promises of inclusivity, the City of Vancouver is no more guilty than the IOC itself, which had become pretty adept at the politically correct rhetoric as long as no actual binding commitment needs to be made. One could envision that the IOC would one day adopt a fourth pillar of Olympism, “social responsibility,” for example. Doing so, however, would be precisely the wrong thing from the IOC’s corporate perspective. As Lenskyj wrote, “Realistically, however, the profit-making motives of multinational corporate sponsors of the Olympics would not be well-served by any requirement that, to their eyes, smacked of socialism, or even one that took social responsibility seriously.”<sup>28</sup>

The IOC is also fond of saying that it doesn’t like to “interfere” in social issues of host cities, while interfering in every way possible with local social priorities. Whether pillars get added or not, “as long as the Olympics remain a source of enormous profit for the major sponsors and television networks, and as long as Olympic-spirit and world-class-city discourse continues to disguise the real costs to taxpayers and the real impact on already disadvantaged populations, the [IOC’s] proposed reforms pose no threat to the status quo and hold no promise of significant change.”<sup>29</sup>

## Broadcasting Misery

The problem posed by having the homeless still wandering around when throngs of tourists descend on the Olympic host city is potentially manageable: The numbers of the former are not that great and are containable; moreover, many tourists, especially those from North American cities, have homeless problems back home, so the shock factor is not extreme. It becomes a more urgent problem of management, however, due to one key factor: television. The broadcast companies will be sending trillions of pixels around the globe to an audience estimated at well over three billion. For their sponsors, trying to sell stuff when sick, hungry, ragged people wander in and out of the frame can be definitely off-putting to those watching from the comforts of a warm home. The magnifying effect of the television cameras makes a semi-manageable problem into a really embarrassing headache for the IOC and the host city organizers alike. The solution, as always, is to move the problem.

## Resistance and Hope

By 2006 it had become obvious to the various anti-poverty groups in Vancouver that not only was poverty worse and homeless rates increasing, but the City of Vancouver was not going to do anything about it. The most radical of these groups, the APC, staged a series of protests and actions that served to make government and VANOC nervous. Each time VANOC would hold a special event, the APC was there. At the unveiling of VANOC’s “Olympic clock,” one activist grabbed the microphone and shouted obscenities against the Olympics. Native activists drummed and sang, drowning out the songs of the “cute” natives that VANOC had brought out for the event. The APC began to get media coverage, and while the latter tended to be very negative, the genie was out of the bottle; many British Columbians were forced to face the fact that poverty in Vancouver had increased as a consequence of the 2010 Olympic developments. The City struck back: APC members were arrested and charged, and another anti-poverty group allied to them, DERA, had their City funding cut off. Punishing DERA in the end simply wound up punishing some senior citizens of Chinese ancestry that DERA had been helping.

Vancouver City Council had meanwhile dug in its heels, and Mayor Sullivan declared that the City was not going to “surrender to hooligans.” They weren’t going to do anything serious about the underlying poverty issues either. The promises to the poor, promises that had led many social progressives to vote yes in the plebiscite, were simply abandoned. Although many Vancouverites noted the broken promises, a large number didn’t really seem to care, at least if the mainstream media were to be believed. In this regard, Vancouver also mimicked Sydney where, “Sydney Olympic organizers relied on ‘Olympic spirit’ discourse to diffuse public outrage on the numerous occasions when Olympic officials failed to live up to the lofty standards touted in pseudo-religious rhetoric.”<sup>30</sup>

And just in case anyone in APC or any other organization had thoughts of doing anything even more radical, the Olympic security machine was beginning to sputter to life. As we will see, the 2010 security forces might not be able to do much against a real external threat, but perhaps that wasn’t to be their main purpose: Maybe their *raison d’être* would be to contain domestic Olympic opponents.

## Works cited:

<sup>25</sup> These included: Janet Austin, YWCA; Carole Brown-Ray, Cam Community Centre; Tung Chan, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.; Nancy Chiavario, Mt. Pleasant Community Centre Association; Ken Clement, Lu’ma Native Housing Society; David Eby, Impact of the Olympics Community Coalition; Maureen Enser, Urban Development Institute; Robert Funt, Salient Group; Paul Gauthier, BC Paraplegic Association; Al Kemp, BC Apartment Owners and Managers Association; Kim Kerr, Downtown East Residents Association; Martha Lewis, Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre; Andrew Mak, Strathcona Community Centre; Karen O’Shannacery, Lookout Emergency Aid Society; Peter Simpson, Greater Vancouver Home Builders’ Association; Terry Soper, Gather Place DTS; Jean Swanson, Carnegie Community Action Project; Krista Thompson, Covenant House; Shayne Ramsay, BC Housing, ICI Housing Table facilitator; Cameron Gray, Celine Maboules, City of Vancouver Housing Centre (Celine Maboules is one of the staff people who drafted the City’s response to the report); Steve Hall, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; Greg Steves, Heather Brazier, BC Housing Policy Branch; Andrea Long, Service Canada; Suzanne Bell, BC Residential Tenancy Branch; Enzo Guerriero, VANOC, Elizabeth Bowker (recording), VANOC.

<sup>26</sup> Report of the Inner-City Inclusivity Table, March 2007: [vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/icihousingtablemar07.pdf](http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/icihousingtablemar07.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> David Eby, “A Plan to Achieve the 2010 Olympic Housing Commitments,” presented to Vancouver City Council.

<sup>28</sup> Helen, HJ Lenskyj, “The Olympic (Affordable) Housing Legacy and Social Responsibility,” in N. Crowther, R. Barney and M. Heine (Eds.), *Cultural Imperialism in Action: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, University of Western Ontario, London, 2006, pp. 191-199

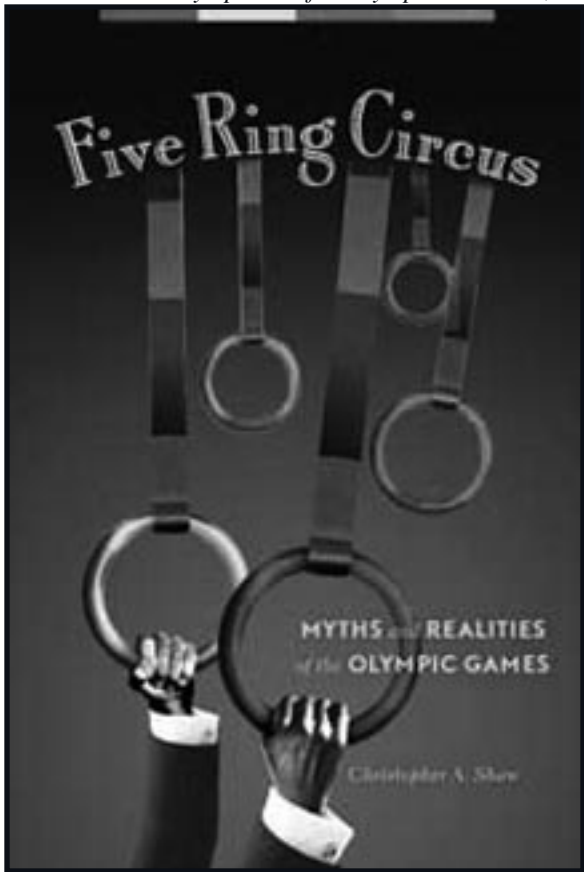
<sup>29</sup> Lenskyj, *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>30</sup> Helen, . Lenskyj, *The Best Olympics Ever?*, citing David Whitson and Donald Macintosh (1996), p. 292

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# Rental Tips .....

from Marcella

I thought I would let you know what the status is on such a residential tenancy situation...so that you can all be better informed.

A landlord can only ask a tenant to leave if:

- they (the landlord) are demolishing the building.
- they are renovating.
- they are turning the building into a strata condominium
- they intend the suite to be a caretaker suite for the building
- they are converting the suite to a non residential use
- the tenant no longer qualifies for the subsidised rental unit
- the building is for sale and the new owner, or close family member\* are going to move in.
- the rental unit will be occupied by the landlord, or close family member\*

NOTE: \*Close family member is Parents or Children. NOT siblings.

The landlord must possess all the appropriate building permits prior to submitting the notice to end a tenancy.

The landlord must serve you notice on the proper form work, #RTB-32, no later than the last day of the month, two months prior, AND they must give you a cheque amounting to one month rent when they serve you notice.

All this info is on the BC Government's Residential Tenancy Branch site:  
[www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/rightsResponsibilities/ending.aspx#195](http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/rightsResponsibilities/ending.aspx#195)

Click on 1.9.5 - How can a landlord end a tenancy? This will get you Form RTB-32:  
2 Month Notice to End Tenancy for Landlord's Use of Property (PDF)  
[www.rto.gov.bc.ca/documents/RTB-32.pdf](http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/documents/RTB-32.pdf).

The salient points are:

## COMPENSATION FOR TENANTS

- On or before the effective date of this Notice, the landlord must pay the tenant an amount equal to one month's rent payable under the tenancy agreement.
- If this Notice is ending a periodic tenancy, the tenant may withhold the last month's rent instead of being paid compensation.
- Compensation is not owed to tenants who receive this Notice because they do not qualify for the subsidized rental unit.
- If a tenant has already paid the last month's rent, the landlord must refund the rent as the compensation.
- If the landlord does not take steps toward the purpose for which this Notice was given or if the unit is not used for the stated purpose for at least 6 months beginning within a reasonable period after the effective date of this Notice, the landlord or purchaser must pay the tenant an additional amount equal to double the monthly rent paid under the tenancy agreement.
- If this is a periodic tenancy, a tenant who receives this Notice can give 10-days notice and move out early. The landlord must still pay the tenant one-month's rent as compensation.

If the landlord is using the building/suite for their own use, this must be In Good Faith. They must actually intend to, and actually occupy the building for 6 months. Failure to do so can entitle you to an additional one month compensation.

The dispute resolution process only costs \$25.00 to submit a complaint. It is a time sensitive process and has to be done with in the guidelines listed on the site.

Regarding one month notices to end a tenancy: A landlord can only give you one month notice if you as a tenant have done something wrong.

The following Residential Tenants hot-line number: 1 800 665 1185 is very useful.

The folks in the RTO office, in the Dogwood Building at Fort St. and Wharf St., are also of great help.

And in any sticky situation keeping a record of all activities, conversations, etc is most useful should it come to arbitration.

Stand up for your rights!

Get the landlord to submit anything they want to communicate to you in writing.

Also it is legal to record a phone conversation as long as one person knows it is being recorded, and that person can be you.



# Free University ..... Enroll NOW !!!!!

By C'daoim

Adult education has been around in Canada since 1917.

According to the website of the Workers Education Association (WEA), they were the sole provider of adult education for their first fifty years of operation, until provincial governments opened Community Colleges. The Association has gone through some changes over the last few years and seems to be a part of an evolutionary process in education that is sweeping across the country.

For example, in 1995 a man named Earl Shorriss launched a program called the Clemente Course in the United States, which has spread around the world. His idea was to teach a university level course in the Humanities to the marginalized sections of society who faced barriers to higher levels of education. He wanted to bring literature, art history and moral philosophy, American history and writing to the students. It has proven to be quite successful. The WEA has recently introduced a program titled "University in the Community."

There are courses opening up in Canada that are taking this idea to the next level and there is one such opportunity right here in our own city. These free university level courses offer a wide array of possibilities for our citizens who find themselves in a position without the opportunity to experience higher levels of education. It is the chance to be exposed to knowledge that has changed and altered the quality of life of our species for thousands of years. It is the possibility of becoming engaged in learning to learn, this is what democracy is about. At the very least students find themselves looking at our society and themselves from a new perspective, an informed one.

Just recently I had the opportunity to find out how big this movement is in our country when I was given the chance to attend a National Conference (held in Calgary) on these programs. Universities from across our nation are taking the lead in developing the next level of adult education for those with barriers. Part of the beauty of the Canadian idea is that students and project coordinators work together to help develop these programs. At this conference there were students from Halifax to Victoria who were able to share their experiences with one another and bring their insights as students to the project coordinators of these programs. The interaction over the three days was understood as "being equals" who were attempting to discover why these programs are so successful. The desire is sustainability and further development of the idea.

It is so powerful when you meet fellow students who have also experienced this opportunity. Understanding develops confidence and confidence inspires a person to challenge the next step in their personal development, well that is how I felt when I took these courses. The conference allowed me to recognize that it was having the same affect on students from across our nation. Then conversing with Professors, Deans and Project Coordinators who were interested in our ideas and critiques demonstrated that the "standing on equal grounds" was sincere and not a cavalier aside.

Uni 101 and Uni 102 go under the umbrella title of Uni 101 and they are offered on the campus of the University of Victoria. One is a course in the Humanities and 102 is a course in the Social Sciences, with more faculties showing interest in such a successful and proven educational structure. The Professors who instruct the classes are top-notch in their respective fields and they do this voluntarily because of their personal commitments to education. Then there are the Teaching Assistants (TA's) who also volunteer. These are graduate students who desire to help students understand how to do research or even help if a certain topic requires a little more consideration.

The courses are completely free, well, no there is a hidden cost and that is three bus tickets (if you ride the bus). This is the maximum expense to take university level courses in our city and the bus fare is only required to get you to and from an information session that is required by all who wish to apply, then one more ticket to get to UVic on the first day of class. A thing to consider of course is that preference is given to those citizens that find themselves in a situation where barriers stand in their way to a higher education. What a refreshing idea, a hand up not a hand out.

Applications for Uni 102, which begins in January, are available and the information sessions will begin in November between approximately Nov. 1 and Nov. 19 with the deadline for applications being Nov. 20th. All reading material, paper, pens and even the binders are supplied. Dinner is on the house as is childcare and bus fare. Opportunity is calling and if you find yourself interested in moving to the next step in your personal growth you should take advantage of this great prospect.

Contact Becky Cory at either [uni101@uvic.ca](mailto:uni101@uvic.ca) or phone her at 250-361-7014 to ask any questions or to learn more about getting an application and finding out about the information sessions.

**Become informed...Society needs you.**





# Hats Amoré !

By Rob Mason

Well as summer is now officially over (yes that was summer we just had), and though we are still enjoying reasonably pleasant temperatures it will not be long before they to will slip away, as fall is here, which will soon give way to winter. I have chosen to point this out not because I am particularly focused on the weather but rather for those who are the most significantly affected by the soon approaching winter. If you haven't already guessed I am referring to those throughout our community who for the most part eke out their existence on our streets.

I have been personally inspired by a local church that is collecting socks for the homeless - all they collect will be given to "Our Place" to be distributed to the disadvantaged that frequent there. It occurred to me while this is a worthwhile thing to do, more body heat is actually lost through an uncovered head and while gloves might not be essential - they certainly wouldn't hurt.

Recent counts estimate the homeless numbers to be approximately 1200 and all indicators seem to suggest these numbers will increase before any lasting solutions are implemented.

I hope many who receive this will feel inspired enough to be part of, admittedly not a solution to the issue overall, but at least will serve to provide a measure of comfort (making available through donation hats & gloves) to these unfortunate individuals so that they will not be as adversely affected over the winter while the lasting solutions are still being formulated.

**It is my hope to collect as many hats (winter) & gloves as possible** (ideally new - but any in reasonably good repair certainly wouldn't be declined). I invite you to resign from our debating society that seems to never be at a loss for reasons not to help these individuals to just participate, with the simple motive of trying to help ease the suffering of these members of our community.

**If need be I am willing to pick up any donations - I would make those that are served by "Our Place" the recipients.**

Autumn is now upon us - which brings in tow, various celebrations: Thanksgiving will have come & gone - as you read this - a time set aside where one could express gratitude for the abundance in their lives (if indeed they are currently feeling grateful & experiencing abundance). Not far off is the approaching winter solstice (which again prompts some to acknowledge its arrival with some variety of celebration or observance). It also means for some that it just be plain wet, miserable and cold. So in the spirit of abundance & gratitude & in recognition that many are not currently in a position to be experiencing either & in recognition of the approaching winter weather I seek donations which I would like to have collected by Nov. 15th.

I can be contacted @ 250-590-2432 to arrange pickups etc. - to be successful I hope to tap both our collective humanity and the power of your network - so please pass this on!

Thank you to all those who choose to get involved!



# Charter Victory

By Tavis W Dodds

In a decision to a case which will be forever after referred to in courts as Victoria Vs Adams, Madam Justice Ross has this morning recognized for the first time in Canadian justice, that homeless people have rights guaranteed under the Canadian constitution, and that policies directed against the poor illegally infringe on those rights.

There is a celebration developing amongst the street community in Victoria and across the nation. Dozens of people have been coming to the lawyers' office and to the lawn of the court house. There is an overall sentiment that there will be tents erected tonight.

The date of this judgement comes exactly three years after the application was first championed by Catherine Boise-Parker and Irene Faulkner. It also falls within the holiday season which is celebrated by the Jewish faith as including Sukkot, a festival of tents in reference to Leviticus 23:41-42 where God commands that seven days be spent living in tents. The judgement coincides with the federal election day as well, but much of the original source of the social movement that brought us this far dates back farther than any of today's administrations.

In 2000-2001, a group became known as the Spiral Islanders, after a protest of a small group of young campers that refused to move along, but were continuously displaced by Christ Church Cathedral, the Province of BC, the Victoria Police Department, The Provincial Capital Commission, the City of Victoria, and many other organizations including even the local media monopolies. The movement gained steam and momentum, grew in numbers, and was invited into a warehouse by Jeweller Rob Lund, only to be cast out again after police forced the landlord to cancel the lease. At one peak of the escalation City Hall was occupied for weeks, and after extreme measures taken by the police which saw at least one homeless activist rail roaded into jail for 3 months and others seriously brutalized, the group moved to the Legislature lawn in solidarity with the Students' Day of Action.

After weeks of occupation, the camp established itself as a truly benevolent community. Hundreds of police moved in and arrested protesters for simply being on the legislature grounds, which at that time was on Songhees disputed territory. The Attorney General on both the federal and provincial levels admitted in court that they never had evidence to have made the arrests. The camp was thrown into a dumpster at six in the morning.

One of those arrested, David Arthur Johnston, helped establish a subsequent tent city, this time on the grounds of St. Anne's Academy, the first Catholic Church in BC. Police and security again used extreme measures, and the campers set up across the street, at Cridge Park, the tent city which became the subject of the case of Victoria Vs. Adams. Campers held on for weeks, but were eventually wiped out.

David Johnston continued to return to the gates of St. Anne's, facing whole battalions of security guards hired expressly for the purpose of torturing David, carrying him off the property, threatening him, keeping him awake, and stealing his things. Police drove him repeatedly to the city limits, even in the winter rain, only to have him return again to the gates of St. Anne's. This continued for over two years with David facing longer and longer jail terms through which he refused to eat in custody. Eventually, in what witnesses describe as a totally bogus trial in which Legal Aid seemed to be making arguments for the Crown, David was sentenced to seven months in jail. He was released over a month later trying to hold up his pants while media interviewed him.

There have been thousands of people who have sacrificed so much, especially when they are a people that has so little to sacrifice. Even without food or housing, the people facing basic survival have proven themselves of the highest dignity of humanity. Our society has been created in part by homelessness, in this court case, and now society must account for having ever fought against the rights of the poor in the first place, for having disregarded every broken oath to uphold the constitution.

Our society has been found to be unlawfully oppressing the poor, which everyone has always known, but which was officially recognized for the first time this morning, Oct 14th, 2008.

Tavis Dodds is the Work Less Party Candidate for Victoria City Council ([worklessparty.org](http://worklessparty.org), also see pg 7).



# The Advocate: Poverty and Addiction

By W. Robert Arnold

In this article I wish to deal with the mythology that says all poor people are addicts or alcoholics. This mistaken belief held by so many is a way of avoiding having to do anything about the problems they see. After all, how can one truly assist someone who is drunk or on drugs? One can certainly not help them by giving them money.

This is the way that the myth actually injures the believer. It takes away the power to do anything about the problem. It also injures the addict or alcoholic, who so desperately needs our help, by allowing someone who could help to turn away feeling powerless.

As usual, the way to deal with mistaken beliefs is to give people the facts so they have a basis upon which to build new beliefs. So here are the facts.

Anyone who has a \$500 a day drug habit is certainly not poor. They are either rich or they are doing something, possibly criminal, to get the money to support their habit. They may not have a lot of money left over for such things as rent, clothing or a nice car; but poor people don't get to spend \$500 a day on anything.

A single poor person in Victoria has an income of less than \$1750 in the month. If the person is on welfare he [or she] has \$610 per month. No poor person can afford a full blown drug habit.

Drug abuse is actually seen in every segment of society. People can impoverish themselves through over use of drugs or alcohol. On the other hand, being poor is so depressing and soul killing that one might be driven to drinking alcohol or doing drugs, when one can afford them, more often than someone who is well off.

Most poor people are struggling to survive and to take care of their children and themselves. A great number of them are working as much as they can given the present market. Many are working at low paying jobs that are often only part time.

A very small percentage of poor people end up on the street drunk or stoned. Unfortunately, these people are very visible, which leads some people to generalize from the specific and believe all poor people are like that.

Compassion demands that we do something about the people who have the illness of addiction. Unfortunately our society at this time is not very compassionate. It is not willing to take the steps necessary to treat this very serious problem.

We have proved that the war on drugs does not work, yet the society keeps on waging it. We need to legalize all drugs and treat addiction as a medical problem instead of a legal one. In some other jurisdictions these steps have lessened the incidence of drug abuse.

A Guaranteed Adequate Income would eradicate poverty and make it less likely that anyone would have to escape into alcoholism or drug addiction. By removing the stigma presently attached to being poor we would enhance people's self esteem and there would be less need to escape at all.

In the meantime we must try for harm reduction as a stopgap measure that will at least make the situation a little better. One very important element of a harm reduction plan is a safe injection site: a place where people can use clean needles, have a nurse present in case of an overdose and find access to necessary services. This seems to me to be the very least that we can do.

The very least you can do is write a letter to your MLA or Member of Parliament telling them that you support the creation of safe injection sites and that they should work to remove any barriers to their creation. When they get enough letters we will get action.

Robert is a 65 year old man who has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years. He is President of the National Anti Poverty Organization, where he helps the voices of poor people be heard in the halls of power.





Before It’s Too Late...

by cyann ray

Apparently I’m middle-aged.

Now I’m no mathematician, but unless I live to be a hundred it’s more accurate to say that I am two thirds done. Regardless of how I divvy up my life, I think I’m clearly passed the half-way mark. Perhaps it’s morbidly premature to ponder my own pending demise, but after living through my mother’s year-long death from cancer and now watching my dad spend his so-called “golden years” in a public senior facility, I can’t help but think about the end that faces us all.

At 83 I tell my dad he’s one of the lucky ones ... he’s still here. Besides the usual aches of aging and a much slower gait, he lives a pain-free life with professional care-givers meeting his basic needs.

My mom passed away ten years ago, shortly after her 69th birthday. We were all blessed that she was able to stay at home with palliative care. Everyone is going to die, but those provided with a ball park figure as to when are seriously advantaged. Being able to tie up loose ends and say goodbye goes along way in the healing process.

It’s been said that death is the great equalizer ... rich, poor, happy or miserable, it takes us all. We hear about tragic deaths, about young people in their prime just starting their adult successes. And peaceful deaths of aged souls who’ve lived good, long lives, perhaps leaving us in their sleep. And the senseless death, usually seen as preventable.

But death is not preventable and despite what most health gurus preach, we cannot control our departure. Obviously good, clean living may win out over reckless abandon, but a drunk driver is just as likely to kill a vegan yoga master as a suffering, homeless junkie. The fact is death is out of our control. The only way we can provide shape and destiny is in how we live our days. How we breathe and feel and act right now.

And now that I am passed the half-way point I can’t help but think about the end of my journey. Not so much in the practical sense like funeral arrangements or will preparations, but rather in a general tidying up or editing of my life so far. Clean out my locker. Organize my photos and stories. And tell those whom I cherish how I feel about them.

But there is more involved with aging than simply getting closer to death. Watching how my dad’s life has diminished over the years and empathizing with his dire boredom and loneliness has compelled me to think about an aging plan. Maintain some hobbies I can do when I am feeble and housebound and be prepared to chat it up with aged strangers who are likely in the very same boat as myself.

The main factor in determining how well we age and how well we die (as long as that drunk driver doesn’t get us), is our health. Mine began failing me quite some time ago, but I am optimistic that I will get better before the inevitable aging process takes root and slows me down.

I’m optimistic because in spite of chronic pain, I am still able to cycle 10-20 miles per day and, thanks to the L.I.F.E. program (Leisure Involvement For Everyone) I can use the pool/gym facilities in my neighbourhood at no charge. I also know what healthy eating is, even though I often fail to do so. I certainly think the key ingredient to good health (besides genetics) is motivation and turning 50 this year has certainly spurred at least my mind into action. I know I will age “better” if I take care of myself, although I still believe we have no control over death itself.

I recently learned that a dear friend of mine will lose her struggle with cancer When I sat by her hospital bedside last week, I thought how brave and focused and calm a soul she is and how much of my own time I have wasted.

I must do better ... I must live better. I must stop making unhealthy choices. Living for the moment or being reckless is common fare for the young and perhaps we all need a free-spirited time in our lives to develop a sense of wholeness and perspective. But we must also grow out of that mindset.

Twenty-eight years ago I became a parent and I realized immediately that I no longer had the freedom to take unnecessary risks or be irresponsible I felt morally obliged to not only set a good example of healthy living, but to also ensure my own continued survival.

Death will catch up with all of us, regardless of how we live. But we can make lifestyle choices that will strengthen our hearts and souls and perhaps buy us more time with our loved ones. And if this internal dialogue with my sullen self has any outside effect, let it be a fresh and practical approach to whatever days lay ahead for each of us.

Into the Lair of the Beast:  
Why I’m running Against Victoria City Council, or  
Towards and anarchist solution to Victoria’s Drug War

By Tavis Dodds

It’s not news that the City of Victoria worships money. Nobody needs to tell us that our representatives are in bed with big business. Everybody already knows that council’s only agenda on poverty is to further entrench the oppression and slavery of the poor. The very least is done to support this criminalized level of society with one hand, while the other hand actively prohibits Victoria’s disenfranchised from exercising their basic civil liberties. None of this is news, but what is newsworthy, what will never appear in CanWest’s media machine, but what should be at the forefront of our minds, is that this pre-Olympics social cleansing is being sold as emergency aid for Victoria’s most vulnerable. City Hall is helping put forward a horror of deception.

When Al Lowe became mayor you might be able to buy powdered cocaine in front of the Douglas Hotel. The official position on poverty, back then, was to do nothing beyond increasing police pressure. Through tireless campaigns by thousands of citizens, many of us doing jail time for voicing our valid social concerns, and several of us having been brutally assaulted by Victoria Police officers, the issue was forced into the light. In November’s impending municipal election, Mayor Lowe is stepping down as leader of a city engulfed in hard core drug victims, crack is easier to find than pot is, and 16 year old kids hopped up on speed are all over City Hall’s backyard. In the weeks leading up to the election, the city is due to release a plan calling for the elimination of homelessness by 2018.

The report (yes, another report) is put out by The Coalition to End Homelessness, formerly the Mayor’s Task Force to End Mental Health, Addictions, and Blah, Blah, Blah, and not to be confused with the Ad Hoc Committee to End Homelessness that holds open meetings at Silver Threads on Wednesday nights. The Coalition is a huge collision of poverty pimps, and the report is written in bureaucratese, full of numbers that seem to be made up from nowhere. The focus, for some undisclosed reason, and after many years of discussion, is on addiction, rather than mental health, as if the two could be easily separated. The report says nothing about harm reduction or the recent closure of the needle exchange, but does call for an increase in methadone distribution.

At the core of the program is a database of files about the “chronic homeless,” including anyone who uses services, is stopped by the police, or released from jail with no fixed address. The information in these files on the poor will be shared amongst the participants in the coalition, and a group of what are called VICOTs, or teams of social workers assigned files on poor people for them to monitor and control. One of the goals of the program is for VICOTs to follow the court conditions of the poor and report any breaches to the police.

The report also calls for an increase in transition housing, or temporary housing, that can and does include all sorts of totalitarian measures such as no food in the rooms, curfews, constant scrutiny by door staff and video cameras, and the prohibition of children on the premises. All of these suspensions of civil liberties of the poor, and the underlying philosophy that the poor are somehow less than human, are to be presented to the public as a great sacrifice or gift to Victoria’s disenfranchised, but the truth is that this plan is the implementation of the Olympic Committee claim that “there will be zero homeless on the streets come game time.”

In this political climate I am running straight at City Hall, as the Work Less Party candidate for city council. My message need not go further than that City Hall is helping launch very precise and planned attacks on whole groups of society, but many people believe that there should be a solution presented, and I’m not doing that. Presenting no alternative does not affect the message that City Hall worships money; the argument is just as valid without coming up with alternatives.

Other candidates would be better sources for ideas as to how we can use the state to meddle in people’s lives: candidates like Rose Henry, the strong first nations woman behind The Walk For Justice and so many street level initiatives, would be a better candidate at both using the state and dealing with the mumbo-jumbo the job of City Councillor entails.

And there are a lot more issues that need to come up, and more corruptions exist than just this one, but for me, and for much of the people of Victoria, it is enough to simply call government on their lies. The rich are seated in a position of privilege, but the poor are made foot stools for City Hall, and that’s enough for me to throw my name into this crooked system, a name made famous by the popular Victoria furniture company.

*Tavis has been floating back and forth across Canada for 5 years of solidarity with the homeless, as both a homeless person and a homeless activist. His work has appeared in Monday Magazine, The Christian Radical, and AlbertaViews Magazine, and he is a regular contributor to The Republic of East Vancouver Newspaper.*



Tent City at St. Ann’s Academy - 2006  
see related article page 6.



# Cop Watchers

by Brian Mason

A real challenge in democracy is figuring out how to make its systems of checks and balances work effectively and fairly for the benefit of the people. Which brings me to my recent attendance at a monthly meeting of the Victoria Police Board.

Police forces in Canada, at all levels, are, by legislation, under civilian (public) control. Constituted under the provincial Police Act, each municipal police force in British Columbia, including Victoria and Esquimalt's, is required to have a police board to "operate a police department in their municipality responsible for enforcing bylaws and criminal and provincial laws, maintaining order and preventing crime."

Make no mistake about it, a police board, though usually operating below the radar – and never featured in cop shows or mentioned by police unions – is intended to be in charge of the police department:

*A police board sets the priorities, goals and objectives of its police department and develops the annual police department budget. The police board is responsible for service and policy complaints related to its police department. It also receives complaints against the Chief and Deputy Chief Constables (Government of B.C. website).*

Civilian control over law enforcement agencies is one guard against the emergence of a police state. Unless, of course, the police manage to become indistinguishable from the ruling elite and corporate bullies they protect. Or if police boards become submissive to the police, thereby enabling the police to operate as if they were in charge. Or both.

With this in mind, let's look at some elements of the Victoria Police Board's set-up and dynamics, each of which helps cultivate an unhealthy mystique of police culture and power.

Consider, first, the location of Police Board meetings. They often take place in the third floor boardroom of the Victoria Police Department's headquarters. Although meetings are ostensibly open to the public, this means visitors must sign in, obtain a visitor's badge, be buzzed and escorted through security, all impediments to free and open access. More importantly, it's not neutral turf; Board members and observers are surrounded – and outnumbered – by uniformed police officers as well as police promotions, communications and propaganda. It's police show time!

Second, the public part of the meeting is essentially pro forma. There are routine reports from human resources, finance, auxiliary committees and special initiatives. It's an overload of information, which has the simultaneous effect of deflecting and overwhelming Board members with minutiae. The impression is one of tabling these various reports simply to have them dispensed with quickly. Board members seem content asking a few clarifying questions and commending police members on preparing such nice reports.

This is a common problems for boards. Staff keep producing report after report – no doubt well edited by management prior to distribution – which makes it almost impossible for boards to have time to reflect, judge or take a bird's eye view of their responsibilities. There's little time or expectation simply to wonder, or to ask why things are being done the way they are. Preparing, and receiving, reports makes each side believe it's doing its job. More accurately, it serves to obscure responsibilities and create an illusion of effectiveness. This dynamic ensures police "experts" are forever explaining things to their appointed "bosses."

Third is the make-up of the Police Board itself. Leaving aside the mayors of Victoria and Esquimalt, chair and co-chair respectively, board members are supposed to "reflect community demographics and ... consist of qualified people who have shown they can act in the best public interest." Translation: citizens who won't rock the boat, challenge or take a radical position. The selection process, controlled primarily by the provincial government, ensures nothing more. The deference is built in.

Fourth, the good stuff must happen in camera, because it sure doesn't arise during the public part of the meeting. But I doubt it really happens behind closed doors either. Police, like musk oxen, are superb at circling to face the enemy of close scrutiny; it's intrinsic to their culture. Civilian oversight, though tolerated, is hardly embraced.

Last, there's a disconnect between the information in the routine reports and what board members do with this knowledge. For example, although the "crime rate over the last three years has dropped," according to Insp. Gehl, Victoria police are busily trying to increase their force strength by nearly 9 per cent or an additional nineteen members. Further, despite receiving only partial-year funding for these additional members, VicPD is over-spending its overtime budget by half trying to operate as if it already had these additional positions filled. Remember: crime rates are down.

It seems that if crime rates go down, police want more resources. If crime rates go up, they want even more resources. And police officers are very, very expensive: each one carries an annual cost to taxpayers of well over \$125,000 including salary, overtime, benefits, training, equipment and administration. To be sure, no police force ever says it has enough – even when crime rates and calls are down.

Police boards might sound good in theory; however, their volunteer members are hard-placed to stand up to a strong, orchestrated police presence and are hand-picked not to. They could better spend their time advocating for the overhaul of our disastrous drug laws which create so much needless work for police.

Submitted by Brian Mason, a writer and philosopher living in James Bay.

## Elections are in the air this year Checklist: what to bring with you to the polling station

by Rose Keates and Paul Evans

For Victoria residents living in poverty or on the streets, voting in this October's federal election may not have been a priority. Voting is one of the most important ways citizens can communicate with their government, regardless of where they live or how much money they make. There is still a chance to vote in the upcoming city elections.

Rose Henry, an advocate for the rights of homeless people, notes that people living in poverty or abusive situations may have trouble keeping or accessing ID which is needed. She also says that homeless people frequently don't have access to ID that shows an address.

Additionally, many voters do not know what are considered acceptable pieces of ID and whether they will be allowed to vote if they cannot prove their address. They may be surprised to learn that city elections provide a range of options for proving who you are and where you live.

The information below outlines what you need to have in order to register and vote in the City of Victoria Elections.

### Registering and voting

If you are registered to vote in provincial elections then you are also registered to vote in city elections. You should receive a voter information card, which includes instructions, in the mail. If you are not registered, you need to simply show up to a polling station on election day and register before you vote. It's a simple process that takes only a couple of minutes.

In order to register (and vote) in the city elections, you need to be:

- a) a Canadian citizen over the age of 18
- b) a resident of BC for at least six months
- c) a resident of Victoria for 30 days.

In addition, you will need to provide two documents to prove your identity and address. One of those documents must have your signature and the other must show your address. Acceptable documents include a:

- \* BC Driver's License or BCID
- \* BC Care Card
- \* Canadian Social Insurance Card
- \* Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security Request for Continued Assistance Form DES8
- \* Owner's Certificate of Insurance and Vehicle License issued by ICBC
- \* Citizenship Card
- \* utility or phone bill

While pieces of ID on this list are guaranteed to be accepted, the list is not exhaustive. If you bring two documents that identify you (remember that at least one must have your signature on it) and can satisfy the elections officials that you are who you say you are, you should be allowed to register and/or vote. You do not need to have photo ID.

If you do not have any ID that shows your address, you can still register to vote. Simply bring at least one piece of ID with your signature and you will need to make a solemn declaration that you live in Victoria.

Remember, every Canadian citizen 18 years or older can vote in the community they live in, regardless of whether they have a fixed address in it.

*PBSC-UVic is a student organization that is not able to give legal advice. This article is intended as legal information only. Should you have a specific legal problem, it is advisable to consult a lawyer. Special thanks to Irene Faulkner of Underhill, Faulkner, Boies-Parker for her assistance. For more information on our organization, please visit: [www.pbsc-uvic.ca](http://www.pbsc-uvic.ca).*

*The UVic Chapter of Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) wants to help answer some of your questions about the law. If you'd like to suggest a topic, please drop ideas off at Street Newz's mailbox at 1027 Pandora Ave. or email us at [pbsc.articles@gmail.com](mailto:pbsc.articles@gmail.com).*







**What’s Up at BC Hydro ??**

by Don Startin

I had planned this article for October, but sadly my computer obliterated the first one. In October Hydro will probably have held a ‘con’ sultation in Nanaimo. We’ll let you know how it went in December’s Street Newz. We call them CONsultations because Hydro never ask whether the dam should or should not be built, but ask a lot of questions about mitigating the disruptions to local communities caused by the proposed construction.

Up in the Peace River area Hydro’s consultations are getting very acrimonious with protesters gatecrashing the meetings. Significant numbers of the locals oppose the dam and the process, which is perceived as a greenwash to get the proposal before cabinet.

Readers should welcome a new resource on Site C. Steve Rowe of the Northeast News in Fort St John is putting all his articles on a blog.... [www.down-the-river.blogspot.com](http://www.down-the-river.blogspot.com). A good feature of these articles is that Steve seeks to be unbiased.

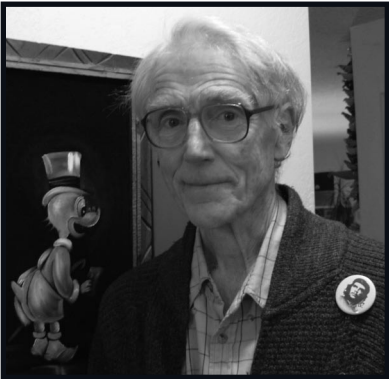
Before we begin to discuss why Hydro thinks we need another dam it is pertinent to go over who does what on the B.C. power scene. Beginning at the top we have our classical neo liberal Premier, who pretty well runs the province out of the ‘Premiers office.’ Next comes Minister of Energy and Petroleum Resources Richard Neufeld who, in theory, rides herd on the energy sector, but tightly under Campbell’s thumb. Out in left field is the BC Utilities Commission, appointed by the government, who monitor electricity rates and have the power to approve or reject applications to build power production projects in the province based on the need for power and cost to the public to build them. In left field the Minister of Sustainable Development [webpage not found?] and his staff of scientists have the power to approve or reject applications to build based on environmental criteria. In center field, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans have the power of veto if a fishery will be adversely affected.

Once generated, the electricity is ‘handled’ by three entities. BC Hydro staffs the generating and switching stations, and maintains the lines. B.C. Transmission Corporation dictates where the power will go, and where and when to build new lines. Powerex, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hydro, imports and exports power, arranging futures as required. An international corporation, Accenture, reads the meters, sends out bills, maintains the vehicles and administers personnel and payroll for Hydro. A classic example of the sleazy way the Campbell Lieberals operate is that the Accenture employees who read the meters masquerade in Hydro uniforms! Many ‘power’ watchers in BC consider Accenture, who under a previous name were Enron’s accountants, to be an ‘eminence grise’ calling the shots behind the scenes.

By law, Hydro may only build ‘heritage’ generating sites. All others must be built by private enterprise. Conveniently, Campbell has legislated Site C a heritage site!

In December we will examine why B.C. has all the power we need and does not need Site C.

*Don Startin is an activist and gardener, an ex-military man who has done many things since leaving the army. Don currently lives a life of simplicity with his wife in Victoria, B.C.*



**Traditional Harvest Feast**

by Richard Boyce

Qwaxsistalla stands overlooking his family’s Tekilekw. He points out three distant ridges on surrounding mountains which, when triangulated with a single wooden post, mark the corner of a root garden that has been cultivated by his family for thousands of years. He looks over a grassy floodplain thick with a multitude of colourful flowering plants.

Chief Adam Dick is sharing this knowledge with the people of Kingcome Inlet and the world by hosting a traditional harvest, pit-fire cook, and feast to celebrate this year’s crop. This type of feast, honoring the traditional ways in which his people tended, harvested, and relied upon the plants that grow on the flood plain estuary, has not been held in over seventy years.

In order to document this historic event he invited several leading academics, graduate students, and myself. Abe Lloyd, a graduate student at the University of Victoria, with the guidance of Chief Adam Dick has spent the past year cultivating the family plot of land using traditional methods.

Several small boats brought everyone down to the Tekilekw and the harvest began using traditional yew tools to dig out the edible roots used as a food source by coastal first nations. Three of these plants have root strands, which vary in thickness and must be cooked properly to avoid indigestion while providing proper nutrients. Springbank clover (Tuxsus), Pacific silverweed (Dliksem), and Nootka lupine (Kwani). The fourth plant harvested was Riceroor lily (Xukwem), which has a bulb which divides into small ovals, some of which must be replanted to allow the plant to regenerate.

Elders, adults, and children participated in the harvest, which was bountiful. Stones from a nearby landslide were collected for their fire resistant properties. Sword ferns, Salal bushes, and Thimbleberry bushes were gathered. The roots were cleaned and tied together in small bundles using plant stocks. The riceroor bulbs were wrapped in pouches made from Thimbleberry leaves. A hole was dug in the sandy soil. A fire was built with cedar and rocks were laid in the coals.

After a ceremony, hosted by Chief Adam Dick and elders from the village, an alder post was held up in the middle of the pile of hot rocks. Whole Salal bushes were thrown on top of the rocks. Next a layer of Sword fern fronds was placed to cover the entire pit.

Whole potatoes, carrots and onions were placed on the ferns. More ferns were laid on top. Then the traditional roots, wrapped in Thimbleberry leaves and contained inside a cloth bag for each of the 4 types of roots, were placed on the ferns. Whole Thimbleberry bushes were placed to cover the entire pile. Two large canvas tarps covered everything and water was poured into the hole left when the alder post was removed. The entire pit was covered with a thick layer of sand.

Pit cooking of the harvested roots took three hours. A ceremony with elders in traditional regalia honored the opening of the cooking pit. A wonderful feast commenced inside the Big House, followed by a dance that celebrated the animal kingdom with drumming, masked dancers, and a teller of the story.

The events of this week-end were documented by Dr. Nancy J. Turner, an ethnobotanist and professor at UVic, along with Dr. Douglas Deur from the University of Washington. Between them they have written many books on the subject of first nations along coastal British Columbia and their relationship with the environment. They are changing the perception established by early anthropologists, which claimed that local first nations were hunter-gatherers who ‘randomly’ accessed the land’s resources. This theory is being replaced by evidence that first nations actively cultivated the land in order to reap larger crops, altering the natural landscape to increase plant productivity.

Together they published “Keeping It Living: Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America” based on information provided by Chief Adam Dick who now resides in Qualicum Bay.

Known traditionally as Qwaxsistalla, he is the Clan Chief of Kawadillikala (wolf) Clan of Kingcome Inlet and was educated in the ways of his people by the Chiefs and his grandparents who sheltered him from the residential schools imposed on his generation. This system, imposed by the Canadian government, strictly prohibited indigenous language, culture, and beliefs. The knowledge that remains is now being passed on through events like this harvest celebration.

All along the coastline of British Columbia, rivers run through estuaries that were traditionally cultivated by First Nations. Many of these have been destroyed or are being threatened by development, pollution, and other human activities. Locally the estuary floodplains of Englishman River, French Creek, Little Qualicum River, and the Big Qualicum River as well as smaller estuaries such as those of Craig Creek, Shelly Creek, Morning Star Creek, and Kincade are no exception.

*Richard Boyce is a free-lance writer and award winning documentary filmmaker. He writes a column about the environment every other week entitled ‘Island Lens’ which has been published by the Parksville-Qualicum News for the past four years. [islandlens.blogspot.com](http://islandlens.blogspot.com).*

*Photo: Chief Adam Dick standing in his ancestral family garden overlooking Kingcome River.*







# Let’s End Apartheid

By Stephen Von Sychowski

*This article was originally published in the August 1-31, 2008 issue of People’s Voice: [www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca).*

In 2002 construction began in Palestine on what will go down in history as one of the most striking symbols of oppression produced by the capitalist system in modern times; the Apartheid Wall. Apologists claim the wall is necessary as a measure to ensure security for Israelis. But the reality caused by the construction of the wall can be considered no less than a drastic new stage in Israel’s decades-old genocidal policy towards the Palestinian people which has in turn generated the violence cited as reasons for the Wall.

Construction of the Wall, which has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice and United Nations, has been marked by theft of land, destruction of property, violence and even murder. The Wall is being constructed not on what would be considered “Israeli territory” by international law, but rather within Palestinian land. This has led to over 2% of Palestinian territory, including several illegal Israeli colonies, being swallowed up into the borders of the Israeli Apartheid state. In its wake, the wall has led to the demolition, without reparation, of Palestinian homes, stores and infrastructure. It has cut off Palestinian families from their water supplies, fields and other necessary means of sustenance.

Not surprisingly, this has fueled anger, protest and resistance in Palestine and has led to the growth of an international anti-Israeli Apartheid movement. But protest against the Wall has been met with further bloodshed and atrocities committed by Israeli occupation forces.

On July 21, the BBC reported that Palestinian human rights group B’Tselem had released footage of a Palestinian protestor, blindfolded and being held by an Israeli soldier, being shot with a rubber bullet in the West Bank village of Ni’lin. The terrifying footage was available for viewing and remains in circulation on the internet. While the Israeli defense minister condemned the act as “a grave and wrong one,” the only difference between this and any other day along the Apartheid Wall construction zone was that a heroic 14 year old Palestinian girl had captured it on film. The soldier who fired on the Palestinian man was detained for one day, and then returned to active duty.

The protest had begun the day before in Ni’lin, one more in a long string of acts of resistance to the wall, spanning the six years since construction began. When hundreds of Palestinians marched to protect their land from construction they were met with sound and gas bombs, physical attacks and threats from Israeli military forces, but they had halted the bulldozers... for now.

The attacks against Palestinians have not only been by military forces. Illegal Israeli settlers have frequently carried out violent attacks, sometimes with the help of military forces. In May, fields belonging to Palestinians in the village of Asira al-Qibliya were torched by Israeli settlers. When Palestinians attempted to put out the flames they were blocked by Israeli soldiers. At least one Palestinian was handcuffed and beaten. In June, B’Tselem released footage showing masked, stick wielding Israeli settlers attacking Palestinian farmers in the West Bank.

Yet in May 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper gave a speech for Israel’s 60th Anniversary in which he referred to the Israeli state as “a symbol of the triumph of hope and faith” and an “inspiration” with a “commitment to the universal values of all civilized peoples: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.” He aimed to tar those who oppose and resist Israel’s racist Apartheid system as anti-Semites who “hate the Jewish people;” a common tactic of switching victim for oppressor. And he concluded by stating that he “can foresee no dark force, no matter how strong, that could succeed in dimming the light of freedom and democracy that shines from within Israel.”

But that light of freedom and democracy couldn’t be much dimmer if you’re a Palestinian facing Israeli occupation and oppression on their own, stolen, land. For that matter, it hasn’t been this dim in Canada for quite some time either until now, under the Harper regime. So just as Harper has declared himself Olmert’s partner in genocide, lets declare ourselves, Canadian workers, youth and students, as partners of the Palestinian people in liberation. Let’s support campaigns against Apartheid and for boycott and divestment of Israel, and continue to fight for the removal of the ultra-reactionary, pro-Apartheid Harper government from power.

*For more information: Canada-Palestine Support Network ([www.canpalnet.ca](http://www.canpalnet.ca)) and Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign ([www.stophthewall.org](http://www.stophthewall.org)).*



## Another good year for the undertaker?

By Gila Svirsky

As Carole King sings:

You know, the people were quite pleased  
‘Cause the outlaw had been seized  
And on the whole, it was a very good year  
For the undertaker.

Well, the alleged outlaw, Ehud Olmert, awaits indictment, probably on charges of fraud, abuse of public trust, maybe bribery, too. The evidence draws a portrait of a man committed to the good life and political aggrandizement, but it does not point to a major scheme for financial bonanza. Olmert was not toppled because of corruption (Sharon and Arafat both maintained their popularity through multiple corruption scandals), but because he delivered to Israel its first loss at war – in Lebanon, of course.

And now Tzipi Livni – scion of a militant dynasty, graduate of Mossad covert operations, protegee of Arik Sharon – was elected head of the ruling party in Israel, and she too talks about change, a new way of doing politics, a preference for peace over territory. This is not a course correction, but the deepening of a direction that had been taken by Sharon and reinforced by Olmert, his successor. All three had been staunch advocates of “the greater land of Israel” ideology until recent years. Investing in the occupied territories had been a mistake, a long and expensive mistake, said Olmert this morning in a post-election interview.

But can we count on Livni to do the right thing, to sit down and negotiate a peace that will be acceptable to both sides – a two-state solution that shares Jerusalem as the capital, a just and viable scenario for the Palestinian refugees, an equitable distribution of water resources, investment in the development of Palestine to ensure its economic viability?

Tzipi Livni is not Mother Teresa nor the Dalai Lama. She probably more closely resembles Alfred Nobel himself, once called a “merchant of death” for inventing and commercializing dynamite. Livni, too, served the military establishment in Israel until she left it for a law career. What made her leave? Rumors abound, but Livni is reticent about this as in other areas.

Will she, like Nobel, also seek a place in history by making up for years of feeding the war machine?

Livni will have many obstacles, the first being to forge a government coalition that will include partners who are not on her side. Then she will have to overcome the deeply rooted existential fear of Israelis, which peace-making evokes. Finally, she will have to take risks of substance, facing down the Israeli war makers, standing up to settlers with their implied threat of a divisive and bloody civil war.

Two years ago, Livni was the only Israeli cabinet member who spoke out against launching an all-out war in Lebanon at a moment when a frenzy of vengeance and nationalism gripped the entire nation.

Can we expect more such political and moral courage? Dare we be hopeful? Or will it again be another good year for the undertaker?

*Gila Svirsky is a writer and an Israeli Jew deeply involved in peace and human rights activism. [www.GilaSvirsky.com](http://www.GilaSvirsky.com)*

*photos: above - “Partnership begins with coexistence, not with walls.” Photographer: Dalit Baum, from [www.GilaSvirsky.com](http://www.GilaSvirsky.com).  
right - In NW Jerusalem, 30 members of the Jahalin families have been relocated 4 times since their initial expulsion in the ‘48 Nakba. From [stophthewall.org](http://stophthewall.org), January 08.*





## Time

Watched clock in a novel unfolding  
Rehearsed in the timing of an age old book  
Metaphor and incidence told in paraphrase  
My kindness is the only coping strategy  
Pressure built inside my fingertips  
Pumping out a play on words  
Cannot go fast enough to outdo the clock  
Treadmills and gadgetry losing grip  
Over time the meal gets cold  
Over time the skin gets rough  
Over time the blood slows down  
And in my head the crimes grow weak  
I have seen a bit of consciousness  
Empty into youth  
As the dust mites blend into carpeted landscapes  
And the corrupted get programmed to believe  
The consequence of actions  
Is a tether ball with no string?  
And doing time a losing win  
It depends on how you view your sentence  
And how you watch the clock  
Cause it will never remain a waiting frame  
You'll find the turning can't be brought back  
Could you eradicate all memory?  
Driving the car over the lines of sanity  
Only to be locked out in the cold  
A wedding without the couple  
A ring without the jewel  
A redemption day out on parole  
From the events that led to this  
It depends on how you watch the clock  
And how time builds

Tara Timmers

## diesel bulge egoist

i work here  
in the heat  
and the dust  
of the big  
dream-hump swing shift  
-14 to 16 hours a day  
under the merciless sun  
like some new slave  
to an old dream so  
i don't wanna hear  
your grovel  
gravel bullshit  
about help, or light  
or the TIME  
or the SPACE.  
just suck it up, off  
the dust  
and the litter  
and the ballet  
being fought out  
on the streets  
and in the alleys between  
the garbage bins  
the lives shot  
through the f'ing head  
make it  
make it bleed  
put the work in  
and it will come flowing out  
from your veins  
in thick black blood  
black  
like the diesel oil flowing  
thru mine.

j. fisher

## Annual School of Americas Protest

November 20th & 21st

November 16 marks the anniversary of the assassination of 14-year-old Celina Ramos, her mother and six Jesuit priests in El Salvador in 1989.

Nineteen of the 26 Salvadoran army officers cited by a UN Truth Commission as responsible for this atrocity were trained at the School of the Americas (SOA).

Since 1990, people have gathered at the gates of Fort Benning, home of the SOA, to memorialize these eight people and all those who have died at the hands of soldiers trained at this school -- as well as to take action in opposition to this training and the racism, repression and failed policy it represents.

The annual November vigil to close the School of the Americas at the gates of Fort Benning will follow the presidential election by two weeks. It will be an opportunity for the progressive movement to push for the closure of the SOA/WHINSEC and to set an agenda against oppressive U.S. foreign policy, whatever the result of that election is.

soaw.org





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Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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Bread & Roses Expenses				
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